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Aruba bids farewell to its first Prime Minister, Henny Eman



Yesterday morning, with a state funeral, the people of Aruba bid farewell to Aruba's first Prime Minister, Jan Hendrik Albert "Henny" Eman. Eman is remembered for his political legacy. The eldest son of politician Shon A.

Eman and Blanche Eman-Hartog, he was born into a family where politics was the order of the day.



From a young age, Henny was prepared to enter politics someday. Like his father, Shon A., who passed away too young, Henny studied law in Leiden with the mindset that a great challenge awaited him once he completed his studies. In the early 1970s, Henny received news from Aruba that the political party his grandfather had founded was facing significant issues. The party was fractured.

Henny returned to Aruba to restore the AVP party and revive the struggle—the dream of being "masters in our own house"—for which the people of Aruba had fought so hard. The AVP party was in disarray. Henny, together with Alicio Quandt and Chibi Croes, led the party as a triumvirate, securing one seat in 1977.

After the election, Henny returned to the Netherlands, completed his studies with a thesis on Aruba's Status Aparte (separate status), and immediately returned to Aruba to continue in politics and keep the fight for self-determination alive.

In 1979, the party received 1,200 votes, more than half of which were cast for Henny personally. In 1978, Henny was elected as leader of the AVP. The Status Aparte once again became the central theme of

the AVP party. Henny not only managed to revive his party but also his homeland. In 1986, he was elected as the first Prime Minister of Aruba after convincing the Netherlands and the Antilles that the people's desire for self-determination was a sacred right.

Henny served as Prime Minister for three terms. A humble man who never sought attention, he was a no-nonsense leader and always sharp in making difficult decisions. His vision remains legendary.

Henny Eman: A statesman with a simple life in the countryside

A humble and tranquil life in the countryside characterized the life of a man who left his mark on the highest state platforms within the Kingdom. This sensible and simple life was the one Henny chose after serving Aruba in the most critical positions.

The visionary of a New Aruba chose to spend his later years in quiet humility, embracing a life close to nature and the tranquility of Jaburibari.

Despite his immense achievements, Henny Eman opted for a life of simplicity and humility in retirement. He never sought or aspired to positions as an advisor, commissioner, or any of the other attractive and lucrative roles often offered to someone with a career as impressive as Henny Eman's.

When he moved to the countryside in Jaburibari, together with friends, Henny built a modest wooden house for himself and his wife, Iris Eman-



Arends. He personally contributed to much of the carpentry work. This simple wooden house, surrounded by the natural beauty of the Aruban landscape, became his sanctuary. He was always surrounded by family, friends, and his two beloved pets.

Embracing the land with the same dedication he applied to his public service, Henny began cultivating a small piece of land near his home in Jaburibari. With the help of friends and family, he planted peanuts and beans, installed an irrigation system, and personally cared for the crops. His harvests, known as "Jaburibari Peanuts," were sold in small neighborhood stores in Noord, packaged in simple plastic or brown paper bags that reflected the simplicity of his work.

During his retirement, Henny remained deeply connected to his roots and his community in other ways.

Henny's humble life after such a distinguished career is a profound example of leadership rooted in service, gratitude, and simplicity. □

